



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FEDERAL AND STATE AUTHORITIES ARREST 18 IN CONNECTION WITH
FEDERAL DRUG TRAFFICKING INDICTMENT**

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that federal, state and local law enforcement officers arrested 18 members of the Escamilla drug trafficking organization for conspiring to distribute more than 500 grams of methamphetamine, more than five kilograms of cocaine and over 100 kilograms of marijuana and in the Austin, San Antonio and Junction, Texas areas.

Those defendants arrested this morning include:

George Lewis Escamilla, Sr., age 56, of Austin;	Cheryl Ring, age 22, of Austin;
Omero Escamilla, age 45, of Austin;	Shawn Duran Cope (aka Cash), age 28, of Austin;
Michael Angelo Escamilla, age 33, of Austin;	Robin Martin Arnold, age 38, of Burnet, Texas;
George Lewis Escamilla, Jr. (aka Chochie), age 32, of Austin;	John Henry Coleman, IV, age 46, of Horseshoe Bay, Texas;
Irene Escamilla, age 33, of Junction, Texas;	Kendra Blythe, age 43, of Pflugerville, Texas;
Mario Duran Martinez (aka Nemo), age 27, of Austin;	Debra Peals, age 44, of Austin;
Eddy Kahookele, age 23, of Leander, Texas;	Marshall J. Kelly, age 46, of Crossett, AR;
Margo Howlett, age 44, of Pflugerville, Texas;	Ambrosio Cano, age 33, of Pflugerville, Texas;
Nina Kovars Ehrlich, age 44, of Austin;	Liliana Moreno, age 22, of Austin;

Arrest warrants have also been issued for:

Arturo Escamilla (aka Tuto), age 31, of Austin;
Leigh Anna Hensley McGrath, age 21, of Austin;
Mistie Farmer, age 34, of Cedar Park, Texas;
Mario Alberto Hernandez, age 21, of Cedar Park, Texas;
Rhonda Turner, age 47, of Lago Vista, Texas;

Upon conviction of the conspiracy charge, each defendant faces between 10 years and life in federal prison. This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation together with the Texas Department of Public Safety Narcotics, Austin Police Department, Kerr County Sheriff's office, and the Bexar County Sheriff's office. Assistant United States Attorney Mark Marshall is prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

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According to the authorities, the defendants have conspired over the last two and a half years to smuggle, transport and distribute hundreds of kilograms of methamphetamine, cocaine and marijuana throughout Central Texas and Arkansas. . The indictment also includes a criminal forfeiture count whereby the government is seeking the forfeiture of \$10 million in drug proceeds. This morning, authorities executing search and arrest warrants seized approximately \$70,000 in U.S. currency and seven vehicles believed to be proceeds of the alleged criminal enterprise. This investigation is continuing.

These arrests are part of “Project Reckoning,” a nationwide operation which targeted members and associates of one of Mexico’s largest drug trafficking cartels, the Gulf Cartel. The Gulf Cartel is responsible for the transportation of multi-ton quantities of cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and marijuana from Colombia, Guatemala, Panama and Mexico to the United States, as well as the distribution of those narcotics within the United States. The Gulf Cartel is also believed to be responsible for laundering millions of dollars in criminal proceeds. A 15-month investigation, “Project Reckoning” resulted in the arrest of more than 500 individuals and the seizure of approximately \$60.1 million in U.S. currency, 16,711 kilograms of cocaine, 1,039 pounds of methamphetamine, 19 pounds of heroin, 51,258 pounds of marijuana, 176 vehicles and 167 weapons.

An indictment a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.

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